File under head — Jacksons letters

Waskatenau
Feb. 20, 1945

Dear Mr. Gard,

I enclose a summary of another of Mr. Jackson's letters. If you wish to use and delete anything, fine! You may "cut down" his (that) other letter. If I can find any other letters, I'll write them up for you as (like) I have this one. I may have a few from pioneers at Lac Ste Anne, Lake Wabamun and the Edson Coal Branch.

Sincerely yours
Wm. H. Parker

Letters of J. Rea Jackson + others to Wm. W. Parker

Sundre, Alberta,

April 3, 1941

Dear friend Bill:

On turning up your letter with a view to reply, I was shocked and ashamed to find that it had been lying here so long without attention, but we were pleased to hear from you, and you do get around. I was wondering which proverb was most applicable to your case---"A rolling stone gathers no moss" or "A sitting hen grows no feathers." No doubt, you will find your new work more interesting and more useful to youth than the more prosaic channels of education.

A number of changes have taken place in the Sundre, Alberta, district since you left. A number of old standards have passed on. Mrs. Alfred Dean, Marshall Green and Ernie Bird have all crossed the divide, all of whom were early pioneers in this corner of the province and all ardent school fair supporters for many years. I haven't seen much of the Stan Dean family since they moved the Eagle Point school three miles into the village. Nancy married a man near Olds and Bessie ~~found~~ married a farmer near there too. How neighbors go!

Recently we have formed a United Church in the town of Sundre and will likely build as soon as war conditions will permit. Mr. Hagen has presented us with a site and a donation of one-hundred dollars to start the building. I ~~am~~ have been chairman of the Church Board appointed. Rev. Elliot of Olds has been in charge of services, which have been held in the hall for some time. But often Mr. Geiger and I have had to carry on as usual without his help.

With a few other little jobs I keep pretty busy. I have

been reappointed for my eighteenth year president of the Sundre School Fair. I am still president of the Rosebud Health Unit, which has the doctor and nurse at Didsbury yet. I am president of the Sundre Cemetery Board, which will have to be reorganized. And with my municipal council duties becoming more and more exacting, I keep well out of mischief. But I am glad to be physically able to continue in spite of my advancing years.

Sundre is working on a cooperative scheme for electric supply and are considering other improvements. We are widening main street to relieve traffic congestion and are planning gravelling the highway north to Rocky Mountain House. There are now over thirty dwellings in the town, which stretches westward to the Bearberry Creek bridge. The town at the crossing of the Red Deer river will be a busy place when the boys come home.

Most of the early pioneers of the "jungles" west of the Big Red are still here. There were but three houses in Sundre when we came out from England in 1926, twelve years after you homesteaded near Edmonton. McKay Brothers, Lobley Brothers and Ed Miller were the first to carve homesteads out of the timber here. They bought oxen in Olds and freighted their goods in to Sundre the hard way. It is said they were warned against the possibility of the oxen losing their cuds under summer heat, and were told to put butter on their tongues to avoid such a calamity. The joke was taken seriously, the pioneers being ignorant of the ways of oxen, and it has been recorded that a keg of butter, amongst their provisions, was badly depleted on the arrival at Big Red hometseads. However, Fred Lobley has been the postmaster here for over thirty years and carried the mail, never missing one trip.

Well, we should be soon on the land again and are looking forward to better crops than the past two years have dealt us. One of my boys is in England and the other is in Italy. And your boy is soon to be

in uniform. I can't ride horseback as I used to do because of my rheumatic limitations but I still get around quite a bit. The gasoline rations keep the use of the little car, though, at a minimum. I can't think of any other Alberta history.

Best regards to your family. I am glad to hear that the girls are doing well in school.

Yours sincerely,

J.Rea Jackson.

Waskatenau Alberta
Jan. 20, 1945

Dear friend Bill:

Hello, Bill! It's nothing like the old days, eh? It used to take a week to drive a team to Edmonton from our place, 60 miles. Now, we get an air-mail letter even, and we can be in Edmonton in a couple of hours by bus. Or we can travel by air down East in a couple of days.

I remember how we used to wade through the mud and water to get to the store near the river. Now we have well graded highways in every direction, and the gravel to Edmonton and Ste. Paul de Metis.

The town of Waskatenau has a splendid school, too. There are seven rooms and playrooms, there are laboratories for science, home economics and industrials arts, all well equipped. And ample playgrounds!

Remember that little park in the centre of the town years ago. Mrs. Fosher planted trees around the edge of it, which have grown beautifully. It is called the Old Timers Park.

Recently the curling rink has been enlarged and doubled in size. The skating rink has been improved, too. Nearly everyone in town either skates or curls.

here soon

There is a new church to be built, I understand. We certainly have a fine minister, and the church has done much good here. One of the teachers leads the choir and the C. G. I. T. The girls plan to have a trip to camp next summer.

Last year the town improved most of the sidewalks. Main street now has new cement walks and gravel now improves the roadways. Some of the old buildings have been removed and new structures have taken their places. The hotel has been remodelled.

I think of the little village that we had here when the C. N. first arrived years ago. How much an improvement the railway was then we hardly realized. But without it we could not market our wheat and hogs, our eggs and poultry, our cream, our livestock. What a time we had at the beginning getting our supplies all down the N. Saskatchewan by barge, or hauling things by wagon from Edmonton. Now they say this is the busiest C. N. line in Alberta.

And Waskatenau has the same old reputation for doing things right, which you held in the early days.

Well, so long for this time.

Your friend,

George.

Glenevis, Alberta
January 15, 1945

Dear friend Bill: So you would like to know how we are doing back at Glenevis. Well, this is really like an anniversary to talk over old times with you. It is just thirty years ago that you arrived on the C.N. construction train and took a homestead near mine, isn't it? Well, the little town fifty miles west of Edmonton has grown a great deal since 1915. The gravel highway right through the village is quite an advance over those early oxen days, when you first built a log cabin in Alberta.

You will be interested to know we have built a fine big community hall here. Did you hear that I bought the old log U.F.A. hall, which you helped to build in 1918? Our boy, Andrew, has our farm now and we run a general store in the hall building, which we have enlarged. We remember the fun that the university moving pictures used to bring us here. Do you ever show any movies any more?

There isn't much timber left in the Glenevis district nowadays. Remember that big woods near our homesteads, where we used to cut lumber together? Well, that timber is all gone now and the land is being cleared up for farms. What fun we had in those old days skidding and hauling logs of spruce, poplar and birch to our little sawmill! Rose and I often see you darning socks for those cold winter days in the woods. What a pity the toes and heels wear out, eh, Bill?

But what joy we used to have in working out of doors together! Remember when the girls on a blueberrypicking expedition set up that scarecrow in your kitchen to fool you? How it surprised you when you came in late from the hay meadows. What big pails of blueberries we used to get on the hills near the homestead! They are a great treat for pies now, the wild land nearly all gone.

Remember how it rained in 1915? Long's hay was floating in the meadow. And what mud! What a time the Indians, returning from a hunting trip, had in fording the creek at you place, when the trail bridge was washed away. What fun for us to watch them swim their cayuses over and build rafts for their wagons. What a huge bonfire they built to dry themselves then!

How hard it was for us to find our cows in this timber in the homestead days. And was it not the usual thing for us to have to search for them on rainy days. How funny it was to see the cattle come on the run during one rainy time, when we went out with a moose horn and a cowbell to find them!

When you are able to get a new car come out to visit us.

Your old sidekick,

Pete.

Robb, Alberta
February 16, 1945

Dear friend Bill:

You do get around a bit in Alberta! So your boy is overseas, too. We lost Pat, too. Yes, he was in action over Germany. Albertans are making history in Europe, aren't they?

Since you were our mine teacher and postmaster at Mile 33, things have changed somewhat. The Edson-Cadomin highway crosses the hill near the school and the mine is now in new hands, the old company having sold its holdings.. Several new buildings have taken place of more antique structures. Still, they seem to have the same old trouble, not enough miners.

What fun we used to have in the schoolhouse at those regular dances. Can you dance those quadrilles and schottisheś yet or do you foxtrot and rhumba now instead of waltzing? We still have good times together in the same old way.

Do you remember how the moose often came right close to the mine, one even grazing in the schoolyard? What fun the miners had feeding the baby moose, which strayed into the cook-house once,when you were here over twenty years ago.

Drillers have successfully found oil near Coalspur and that is certain to make this section of Alberta boom. The old C. N. trains are kept busy hauling supplies for the ever increasing industrial demands lately. And the mines are quite busy because of the coal shortage.

I still travel up and down the railroad and go through the tunnel near the school hill, but I am roadmaster now instead of section foreman. I can't forget the time we met a train at the tunnel entrance and had to jump for the ditch from our speeder. We were just stopping to listen, luckily, but we did not have time to get the speeder off the track. We intend to install an electric stop signal on the tunnel track in the near future. However, I believe the railway is still the safest way of travelling. We have had comparatively few accidents on the C.N.R. in the thirty-five years I have been on the job here.

So long, Bill. Write again.

Yours as ever,

Joe

How are these?
Interesting?

FOOTHILL'S ECHO

by

William W. McK. Parker

1. Winter plans
2. Call of the Moose
3. The Hunt Succeeds
4. The Cable Ferry
5. Christmas Festivities
6. Timber! Timber! Timber!

7 May a Teacher Marry
8 What Happens Then
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Are the above headings of interest to you? I was planning writing a fictional story of the country west of Sundre and Olds, previously ranching land. Do you prefer this to straight history stories? I was wondering if games would be folk lore as well as songs and stories. I have a couple good ones we have played much. I make them sometimes to sell.

W. Parker.

Minor Plans

"I'll [illegible] on [illegible], eh, Bill?"

"Say, it's [illegible] 'Liberal' [illegible], Mere. Chinook will [illegible] over the [illegible], no doubt."

"Who's going [illegible] this winter? It won't be long, now."

"No, it won't be long [illegible]. I don't know; I don't have much luck here [illegible]."

"That's right, we don't. I might as well take [illegible] and go [illegible] to Dawson or [illegible]. That's [illegible] over [illegible],--"

"Don't know; maybe I'll go with you if I can get away."

"If you can't go, no [illegible] your [illegible], Bill."

"Couldn't I will! But I'll try to go."

"Say, I heard we're going to have a [illegible] to [illegible] here [illegible] boys at the log [illegible] how they can ride [illegible]."

"Oh? That will be great! Maybe it will help us get a road out here. Or [illegible], say, can't we have a railroad? Twenty-five miles [illegible] so far; too bad, eh Ben?"

"You said it! Might pay [illegible]! We've got lumber here [illegible] could but sell it."

"Why not [illegible] bridge over the Hot Spot River? Let's go [illegible] the [illegible] and get [illegible], Mere. I've swum my cattle over the river [illegible] time; maybe [illegible] good horse [illegible]."

"They're going to [illegible] Bill. How [illegible] of the [illegible] for the legislative assembly? We need a lot of things down [illegible]. [illegible] need our lumber!"

"[illegible] growing, too, Dave!"

"Not me [illegible]" [illegible] time I've [illegible] I can't [illegible] going up."

"Suppose you run; I'll get Griegs and Blakes over near Didsbury to support you. I'll get you nominated. You've sold enough stock and horses from your ranch to be well known t'other side of the Little Red some fifty miles."

"That's an idea! It sounds as if you had me elected already, but it's not so easy. However, I'll think it over."

"Say, I'm raffling off a shotgun at two bits a throw. Do you want a ticket?"

"Is the shotgun any good?"

"Worth thirty-five dollars!"

"Try to get it, huh! Well, give me a couple of them; pick me out a couple of winners."

"Here, choose your own lucky tickets."

"High! What's that? A wagon coming!"

"Yep, somebody coming, Bill! I'll stay to see who it is; I haven't seen anyone for a week. Maybe they brought our mail."

A team and wagon rocked over bumps and stumps to and fro, winding in and out amoung the pines. It finally stopped near Bill's log corrals and the driver tied the team . He moved toward the cabin, where Bill Sharp and Bert White sat on step at the doorway.

"Hi-Yah! Hi-yah, fellows!"

"High! High, yourself. Well, if it isn't Marshall!"

"Brought your letters, Bill; and yours, too, Bert!"

"Thanks! How's logging?"

"Thanks! I haven't had any mail for a week."

"Logging's fine, just drove home from camp today."

"Going back again?"

"Weel, maybe in a week or two. We won't be sawing till after Christmas."

"Are you taking off any time for hunting this year, Marshall?"

"Well, perhaps a little while, Bill."

"We were thinking of going out, possibly on the fifteenth."

"So? Say, fellows! What do you think! I heard they are surveying all this land clear up to the mountains and the government is bringing in a lot of new settlers, some from Devonshire, some from the north of England!"

"You don't say! Huh! The darn country is no good for anything but ranching around Sundre. Too wet and rainy for any crops!"

"That's right, Bill!"

"It'll spoil our range. Soon there won't be any room for cattlemen!"

"True enough, Bert!"

"But that's what I heard, fellows! Fact; I met a fellow named from Northumberland, a blacksmith and a minister, can you beat it? He was looking for a place--- was planning coming out north of Sundre here to locate near the river."

"Hope you didn't show him the way."

"Indeed I didn't! Soon the headwaters of the Red Deer won't be worth a hang for ranching, Bill! I've got a notion to sell my holdings, I'm never home to look after the place."

"Me, too, Bert!"

"Won't you come in and have a snack, Marshall?"

"I don't mind a cup of tea, Bill."

"How quick a country does grow up. It wasn't but yesterday, it seems, that we came in here ourselves. AndBill, they are asking about building a school out this way already."

"Well, that's O.K., the kids will need a school pretty soon."

Mrs. Sharp welcomed Marshall Green as he entered and all were seated in a short while at the homemade ranch table. A visitor was an event in th those early days, when magazines and newspapers were few.

"Did I hear you say there was talk of a school, Mr. Green?" Mrs.Sharp had been teachingher oldest child to read from her few scant books.

"Yes, I did hear them talking about that at the store. Some of the settlers were coming out this way looking for places."

"The hills will soon be echoing the throbing civilization instead of the call of the moose."

"Mrs. Sharp, you don't seem to mind, you sound poetic, as if you will welcome the change."

"Well, Bert, I suppose it must come. We can't hold back civilization. We can't expect to have these river flats for our own stock always."

"But these flats are all gravel; no sense in ploughing them all up."

"Right, Bill! They wouldn't grow anything but weeds."

"Suppose we plan a littles celebration for Christmas time, a dance or some entertainment in our new building."

"Well, that's a good idea, wife. Open house! What do you think, boys, would you all come?"

"Sure thing!"

"The wife and kiddies always get so much fun out of fixing up things for company."

So plans were laid for the Christmas fun and festivities. Hunting plans and other winter work plans were discussed, too. Snow flurries came with the month of December and with it time for the annual hunting expedition.

II

The Call of the Moose

Early in December two sleighs followed the bends of the river northwestward toward the mountains. It was colder now and often the drivers jumped from their sleighs to warm their toes by walking. Supplies and blankets filled the sleigh boxes and a gun lay close to the driver's s seat. The call of outdoors, of the woods, drew Bill Sharp and Bert White from their warm cabin hearthplaces to the cold of the open road.

Their sleighs trailed snakelike the winding river ice toward the tree-shro uded hills. Hay for the horses padded their packs, which were Santa-like in fulness. On into a fairyland of snow-covered pines went the hunters, their trail shadowed only by the occasional steep, red sandstone-cliff. The day was short as December days are in the northwest so it was beginning to be night when they reached twenty mile cabin, where they started to make camp.

They set up their wood heater in this old log shack, probably built by some forest ranger for the occasional stopping place. Here in a corner they found that tree-squirrels had kindly and generously supplied them with fuel in shape of dried jackpine cones. A roaring fire immediately cheered their inward and outward feelings as a warm supper was made in a short time. Thick trees nearby sheltered their teams, which were given special consideration, for Bill was a horse lover and no less was Bert White.

"Tomorrow night we'll be pitching our own tent,"confided Bert as Bill unrolled his blankets and prepared a soft bed upon a bunk heaped high with freshly cut spruce boughs, laid carefully with the small tips up.

"Yes, Bill,"agreed his pal, " and we'll then be listening for the call of the moose."